

TV CANDIDS

by Terrence O'Flaherty

Fess Parker, the man who made the coonskin cap a symbol of every American neighborhood, is returning to television this fall as a junior United States Senator in a new series titled, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington." Any of those "well-informed sources" in the Nation's capitol will assure you that his jump from a backwoods Davy Crockett to a front-woods politician is not impossible. Just read the biography of any Senator and you'll probably find a little Crockett in all of 'em.

In light of his new assignment, actor Parker is trying hard not to say "Why Shure!" and "Shucks!" It's a terrible thing to have to ask an actor what he's been doing for the past six years. In TV a lot can happen in even less time. Since 1957 Lawrence Welk has turned to rock 'n' roll; hospital shows have replaced Westerns, and Evelyn Rudl is five years older. "Since I did Davy Crockett for Disney I've been waiting for something to come along that had a potential," explained Parker in a Texas drawl. "You have to know what you want. I was green from Texas when I started with Disney. I've been looking around since. I did a movie called 'Hell Is for Heroes' and eventually I'd like to play parts opposite someone like Doris Day." While waiting for another TV series he tells me he got married and built an adobe home on the old Hope Ranch near Santa Barbara. Now, he also has a son and has learned to play polo. No wonder he hasn't had time for TV.

"You probably remember the Jimmy Stewart movie 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,'" said Parker. "Well, this is kind of loosely based on that movie. Stewart played up the naive idealism of a young Senator but we're avoiding that."

"Why?" I asked. "Isn't it about time we got some naive idealism into national politics to make up for recent Department of Agriculture scandals?"

"Well, our scripts are playing up the problems of the Senator's constituents instead," he said.

ABC has saved a good spot for "Mr. Smith" — Saturday nights at 8:30 o'clock starting in September. They've already spent some time in the capitol taking background shots. The rest is to be filmed in Hollywood, D. C.

"What happened to the coonskins?" "Well, Bob Newhart summed it up pretty well when he had a little girl come up to my dressing room and ask for her \$3.95 back because she got a mangy cap. I got 10 per cent of the Disney gross on Crockett accessories. But to sum it up I'd like to do what Jim Garner, Hugh O'Brian and Steve McQueen have done and use 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington' to get back into the 20th Century."

Parker says he would be happy to find something to equal the coonskin cap as a sales item for his new political series. I suggest that he consult those two veteran Washington gift experts, Bernard Goldfine and Billie Sol Estes. They might know just the thing.

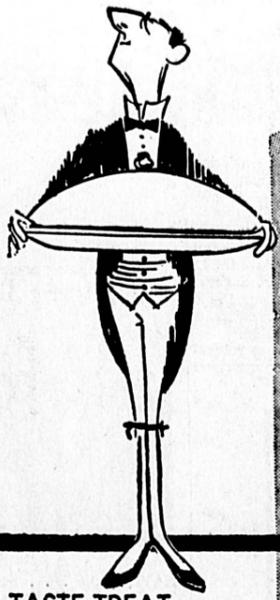
Narbonne Church to Select New Officers

The Narbonne Avenue Baptist Church of Lomita has begun selection of those who will serve in the church organizations during the church year that begins Oct. 1. The nominating committee Wednesday named Grover Harper to serve as Brotherhood president, Mrs. Edith Stinson as Woman's Missionary Society president, Delbert Vaughn as Training Union director, Hugh Dooley as Sunday School superintendent, Mrs. Lella Matthews as recording financial secretary, and Miss Nancy Bridges as the church clerk. More than 200 offices are to be filled in the next two months. The pastor, Robert A. Wells, will speak at both the 8:30 and 10:50 services on the subject "That Blessed Hope." The 7:30 message will be "A Lot of Help From the Life of Lot."

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